SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: Sir, I am really impressed with the articulation of the Minister. But, let him answer the question that while these initiatives have been on, why, during this entire period of tariff reforms in this country, have the prices gone up for the rural telephone subscribers, while it has gone down for urban users and mainly the commercial users of telephone?

SHRI DAYANIDHI MARAN: Sir, I would like to tell the Member, right now, it is an open market and all the private operators and the Government telecom companies compete with each other. Sir, the prices are decided by the TRAI. The prices are set by the TRAI. ...(*Interruptions*)...

SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN: What is the credibility of the TRAI? ...(*Interruptions*).. Everybody knows about TRAI. ...(*Interruptions*).... Credibility of TRAI is well-known. ...(*Interruptions*)..

SHRI DAYANIDHI MARAN: Why don't you wait for me to answer? ...(*Interruptions*).. Why don't you wait for me to complete? ...(*Interruptions*).. Sir, I would like to explain this question because the august Member has raised a very valid point why prices are high in the rural areas and why prices are low in the cities. I would explain to the hon. Member how the price structure is operating in the country. In fact, the rental which is decided by the TRAI is around Rs. 361 per customer per month. But, Sir, we are charging about Rs. 100 to Rs. 120 as rent in the rural areas compared to Rs. 250 in the urban areas. Sir, the BSNL is charging rental at subsidised rates in rural areas. We are trying to get into a competitive mode. Naturally, competition is going to force the prices to come down. It is for the market forces to act. Sometimes we have realised. ...(*Interruptions*).. Of course, I have to agree here with the hon. Member that the price control is not in my hands; it is in the hands of market forces and the regulator, TRAI. ...(*Interruptions*)..

MR. CHAIRMAN: Next question; 173.

SHRI DAYANIDHI MARAN: Sir, the hon. Member is a very senior Member and also part of the consultative Committee. ...*(Interruptions)*...

Indo-Bangladesh Foreign Secretaries talks on fencing

*173. SHRI MOOLCHAND MEENA:†
DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Foreign Secretaries of India and Bangladesh have agreed to discuss border fencing;

†The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri Moolchand Meena.

(b) if so, whether any date has been fixed for the joint meeting between foreign Secretaries on this issue;

(c) whether Bangladesh has stated that Government have launched a military crackdown on Indian separatists bases, promoting security forces on this side of border to step into high alert to prevent fleeing militants from entering Indian territory; and

(d) to what extent border fencing has been completed uptil now?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI RAO INDERJIT SINGH): (a) to (d) A Statement is placed on the Table of the House.

Statement

The issue of border fencing was discussed during the foreign Office Consultations held between the Foreign Secretaries of India and Bangladesh on 21-22 June 2005. Dates for the next Foreign Office Consultations have not yet been decided.

No formal communication was received from the Government of Bangladesh about their launching operations against Indian separatist groups promoting Indian security forces to step into high alert to prevent militants from entering the Indian territory. However since May 2005 there have been occasional news reports in Bangladesh media about operations having been launched against some insurgent groups. The reports also mention insurgents being arrested or killed.

During the Foreign Office Consultations held on 21-22 June 2005, the two sides reaffirmed their commitment not to allow their territory to be used for any activities inimical to each othere's interests. The Indian side expressed its appreciation for actions taken by Bangladesh in the border areas and stressed the importance of continued action consular access and the need for regular exchange of information in this regard. The Bangladesh Foreign Secretary recalled that during the action taken by Bhutan in December 2003, Bangladesh had closed all its borders and kept their forces on high alert.

Out of a sanctioned length of fencing of 3286.57 km., 1961.31 km. was completed by 30th June, 2005.

श्री मूल चन्द मीणा: सभापति महोदय, भारत और बांगलादेश के विदेश सचिवों के बीच भारत और बांगलादेश की सीमा पर बाड़ लगाने के लिए सहमति हुई थी और यह सहमति 3,286 किलोमीटर बाड़ लगाने की थी। वर्ष 2003 में भूटान सरकार ने अलगाववादियों के खिलाफ, जो अलगाववादी समूह भूटान के अंदर थे, जब उनके खिलाफ कार्रवाई की, तो बांगलादेश की सरकार ने उन्हें रोकने के लिए अपनी सेना को अलर्ट किया था और यह भारत और बांगलादेश के बीच बाड़ लगाने का काम पूरा हो नहीं पाया था। इससे कुछ अलगाववादी तत्व इस सीमा के माध्यम से हिन्दुस्तान के अंदर घुसे हैं। मैं माननीय मंत्री जी से यह जानना चाहूंगा कि दोनों देशों के विदेश सचिवों के बीच जो बाड़ लगाने के काम पर चर्चा हुई थी, सहमति हुई थी, वह बाड़ कब तक पूरी लग जाएगी?

श्री राव इन्द्रजीत सिंह: सभापति जी, कुल मिलाकर यह 3000 किलोमीटर के करीब बाड़ लगाने की अनुमति सरकार की तरफ से दी गई है, जिसमें दो-तिहाई क्षेत्र के अंदर आज के दिन तक तकरीबन-बाड़ लग चुकी है। कुल बोर्डर का लगभग 1000 किलोमीटर ऐसा एरिया है, जहां नदियों का बोर्डर है और वहां पर बाड़ लगाना असंभव है। मौजूदा स्थिति के अनुसार, आज के दिन, वर्ष 2006 के अंत तक, जो बकाया क्षेत्र रहा है, वहां पर बाड़ लगाने की कोशिश हो रही है।

DR. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY: Sir, I would like to know whether the talks between the Foreign Secretaries of India and Bangladesh, which concluded on 25th June, reflected some changes in the attitude of Dhaka. I would also also like to know whether the Foreign Secretaries agreed to clear many of the pending proposals, which could contribute to improve relations between India and Bangladesh, and whether Dhaka has promised not to allow its territory to be used by anti-India forces like North Eastern insurgents.

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH): Sir, I am visiting Bangladesh day after tomorrow for two days and every single item on the Indo-Bangladesh issue will be taken up with the Bangladesh Government. I assure the House that if there is any matter that needs to be attended to, I will certainly address it at the highest quarters in Bangladesh.

Pakistan President's statement regarding self-governance in Kashmir

*174. SHRI AMAR SINGH:
SHRI ABU ASIM AZMI:†

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

†The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri Abu Asim Azmi.